

Mental Health Providers' Perceptions of Quality Indicators
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Managed care organizations and VHA are increasingly collecting data on “quality indicators” and reporting on them in an effort to modify clinicians’ practices and improve patient care. Feedback about performance on quality indicators appears to be more effective in modifying practices when clinicians perceive the indicators to be clinically meaningful and to fall under their sphere of influence. Unfortunately, despite widespread and costly efforts to develop and provide feedback to practitioners, little is known about how practitioners view widely used or proposed quality indicators.

The primary objective of this two-year, cross-sectional study is to characterize mental health providers’ perceptions of widely-used quality indicators, including: (1) the clinical value/importance of the indicators (their potential for improving patient care and outcomes); (2) the potential effects (or outcomes) of monitoring quality indicators for providers; (3) clinician ability to influence indicator performance; (4) clinician willingness to accept incentives/risk for indicator performance; (5) the most appropriate organizational level for performance feedback; and (6) the perceived barriers to instituting a constructive feedback process. The study’s secondary objective is to explore provider and workplace\institutional characteristics that are associated with more positive perceptions of indicators and a greater sense of control over indicator performance.

Mental health providers’ perceptions will be ascertained through focus groups and a survey distributed to practitioners in a stratified random sample of 48 VAMCs. Mental health practitioners providing 15 or more hours of direct patient care per week in the selected VAMCs will be eligible for the survey. The sample will include psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and advanced practice nurses.

Understanding providers’ perceptions of quality indicators is essential in planning and implementing a credible and effective feedback process. Data on practitioner perspectives will be helpful in determining which quality indicators to implement and which organizational levels to target for feedback.